

NCC and ESU Sign Biotech Agreement

An agreement signed on September 28 between Northampton Community College and East Stroudsburg University will guarantee students who earn an associate in applied science degree in biotechnology at NCC (with an overall GPA of 2.75 or better) admission to East Stroudsburg's chemical biotechnology program with advanced standing. Students who qualify will enter ESU as juniors and be able to complete a bachelor's degree with two more years of study.

College officials noted that the agreement is an important piece of a 2+2+2 Educational Pathway designed to make it easier for students to prepare for careers in one of the most rapidly expanding areas of today's economy. The job growth in biotechnology is expected to outpace overall job growth by 50% through 2010. Although most of the projected openings are in biopharmaceutical companies, the demand is also expected to come from private and state-run forensics laboratories, the cosmetic industry, large and small breweries, biomedical research institutions, the chemical industry, and governmental agencies such as the Federal Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

In light of industry needs and student interest in the field which holds the promise of breakthroughs in health care and new solutions to environmental problems, Northampton Community College and East Stroudsburg University have been working with the East Stroudsburg, Pleasant Valley, Pocono Mountain, and Stroudsburg school districts, as well as the Monroe Career and Technical Institute to develop a 2+2+2 "pathway" that will ensure students a smooth transition from high school through employment whether they choose to go on for a bachelor's degree or to enter the workforce after high school or completing an associate's degree. The cooperative effort is being funded by a Workforce Leadership grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

The agreement between the two colleges became effective September 28 when officials from both institutions gathered at East Stroudsburg University for a signing ceremony. Participants included Dr. Barbara Bielska, coordinator of the biotechnology program at NCC; Dr. Ken Borland, provost and vice president of academic affairs at ESU; Dr. Peter Hawkes, dean of arts and sciences at ESU; Dr. Michelle Jones-Wilson, coordinator of the biochemistry and chemical biotechnology programs at ESU; Carolyn Kern, dean of allied health and sciences at NCC; Dr. Michael McGovern, vice president of academic affairs at NCC; and Dr. Robert Schramm, chair of the chemistry department at ESU. Dr. Jim Benner, Associate Dean of the Monroe Campus of NCC and one of the co-writers of the DCED grant was also present as a witness. For more information about the 2+2+2 pathway and Monroe County's DCED grant, contact Cindy Adams, the biotechnology director at 570-688-2494.